

# Millionaire sex offender Jeffrey Epstein apologizes in settling malicious prosecution suit

By [Rosa Flores](#) and [Elliott C. McLaughlin](#), CNN

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## Epstein case puts Labor secretary's past under scrutiny (2018)

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**(CNN)** — Multimillionaire Jeffrey Epstein, an alleged serial sex abuser of girls, settled a lawsuit Tuesday, dodging the threat for now that several of his accusers would tell their stories in open court.

The case, which had been unfolding in Palm Beach County, Florida, Circuit Court for almost six years, ends a malicious prosecution counterclaim filed by attorney Bradley Edwards, who represented some of Epstein’s accusers. Edwards filed the counterclaim after Epstein accused him and a now-disbarred attorney of wrongdoing in a civil lawsuit.

## Inside Miami Herald's Jeffrey Epstein exposé

04:32

The settlement came as jury selection was set to begin. Expected to testify were at least seven alleged victims, law enforcement officers, former US attorneys and Epstein’s former associates, said Michael Fisten, an investigator on Edwards’ team.

The specifics of the settlement are confidential, but court records indicate Epstein issued an apology as part of the settlement. Epstein conceded in the apology that he tried to denigrate Edwards' reputation as a trial lawyer, Edwards said in a statement.

"The truth is that his aggressive investigation and litigation style was highly effective and therefore troublesome for me. The lawsuit I filed was my unreasonable attempt to damage his business reputation and stop Mr. Edwards from pursuing cases against me. It did not work," Epstein said in his apology, according to Edwards' statement.

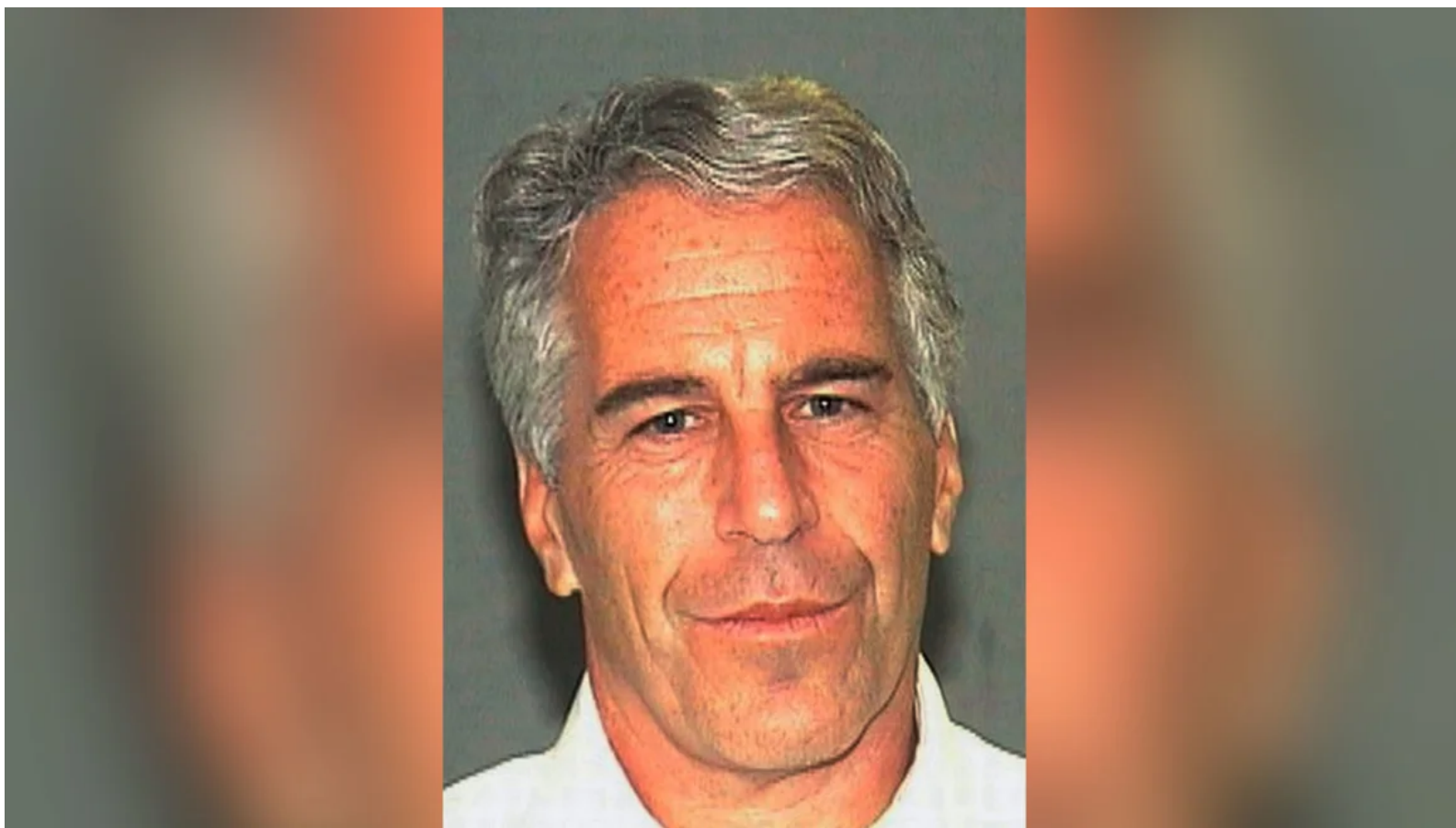
The girls, many from poor backgrounds, were abused for years, Fisten said. The trial was one of two remaining opportunities for them to recount the alleged crimes against them publicly – something that has never happened because the cases against Epstein have been settled, pleaded out or resulted in reduced charges.

## How it began

In Epstein's original lawsuit, he alleged that Edwards and Scott Rothstein, a former lawyer now serving time after pleading guilty in 2010 to crimes involving a massive Ponzi scheme, committed a series of crimes, including fraud and racketeering, to unearth information about Epstein and his business associates.

The purpose, Epstein alleged, was "to defraud investors and support extortionate demands for payment from Epstein," the complaint says.

Edwards fired back in his counterclaim that Epstein was pursuing a malicious prosecution.



Jeffrey Epstein has been accused of serially abusing girls. Palm Beach Sheriff's Office/AP File

"Epstein's primary purpose in both filing and continuing to prosecute each of the claims against Edwards was to inflict maximum economic burden on Edwards in having to defend against the spurious claims, to distract Edwards from the prosecution of claims against Epstein arising out of Epstein's serial abuse of minors, and ultimately to extort Edwards into abandoning the claims he was prosecuting against Edwards," the counterclaim alleges.

The Miami Herald published a report last week saying that, when he was a US attorney, Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta gave Epstein the "deal of a lifetime" despite a federal investigation identifying 36 underage victims of the hedge fund manager. The Herald said it found about 80 women Epstein allegedly molested or sexually abused over a five-year period.

The report said Acosta forged a deal with one of Epstein's attorneys in which the multimillionaire pleaded guilty to two state prostitution charges, ultimately serving only 13 months and avoiding a federal trial. The agreement, the Herald said, "essentially shut down an ongoing FBI probe" and further granted immunity to "any potential co-conspirators" in the case.

## What the settlement means

For Acosta, who declined to comment Monday, the settlement short-circuits a trial that could have proved embarrassing as accusers who feel they were denied justice by the plea agreement would have taken the stand to tell graphic stories of Epstein’s alleged abuse.

Epstein’s federal indictment, which was never made public because of the deal, will stay sealed, and no testimony will be heard from former US attorneys who could paint a clearer picture of the office culture that handed the plea deal to an alleged serial abuser.

The accusers will have one more shot at justice with a victims’ rights lawsuit pending in federal court, which alleges the plea agreement didn’t provide notice to the alleged victims as required by law.

They are hoping the judge vacates the plea agreement, which means the plea would no longer be valid and the current US attorney could prosecute Epstein.

CNN’s Samira Said, Elizabeth Hartfield, Ross Levitt and Eli Watkins contributed to this report.

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